

EXHIBIT M

**Written Statement for the Record of the
Director of Central Intelligence
Before the
National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States
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Introduction

I welcome the opportunity to be here today to support the National Commission's work in preparing a full and complete account of the circumstances surrounding the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. I firmly believe that it is most important for the American people, and especially for the families of the victims of the attacks, to understand what the CIA and the Intelligence Community were doing to learn about and destroy the al-Qa'ida terrorist network and to try to prevent attacks on Americans. It is also important for me to outline for you what we have been doing since 9/11 to forestall any further attacks that Bin Ladin and the al-Qa'ida organization are determined to attempt.

You have asked me to talk about specific themes. What I will do today, as explicitly as I can in this public forum, is tell you and the American people what we learned about the evolving al-Qa'ida threat in the years before the tragic attacks; describe our intelligence collection against the threat; describe the counterterrorism policies and programs we carried out; and describe my role as DCI in the war on terrorism. Finally, I will share with you where we stand now in the war and the challenges we face in winning it. I hope we have a chance later in this forum to go into details on other issues as well.

There have been thousands of actions taken in this war over the past decade by CIA managers, operatives, and analysts. Not every action we took was executed flawlessly, but I believe the record will show a keen awareness of the threat, a disciplined focus, and persistent efforts to track, disrupt, apprehend, and ultimately bring to justice Bin Ladin and his terrorist henchmen.

The Emerging Threat Over Time

September 11 brought the fight with international terrorism home to the United States in the most vivid way. But, we did not discover terrorism suddenly on September 11, 2001. The Intelligence Community, including the FBI, was already fully engaged in this war for several years.

The growing terrorist threat to US citizens and facilities worldwide—including in the United States—has been at the top of the Intelligence Community's agenda for many years. We have a nearly two decade-long record of involvement in fighting terrorism, and particularly in the last decade Usama Bin Ladin and his al-Qa'ida network. It is a record of keen awareness of the threat, disciplined focus, and persistent efforts to track, disrupt, apprehend, and ultimately bring to justice Bin Ladin and his lieutenants and dismantle al-Qa'ida. It is also a record of consistent efforts to warn policymakers and the public of the seriousness of the al-Qa'ida threat.

The Early Years: Bin Ladin as a Terrorist Financier

Although this hearing focuses on CIA's efforts since 1996 to counter the threat of terrorism, it is useful to briefly review for the record how we got to that period. The context is important for understanding both the complexity of the al-Qa'ida target and the efforts we have been taking to defeat it.

Bin Ladin gained prominence during the Soviet-Afghan war for his role in financing the recruitment, transportation, and training of ethnic Arabs who fought alongside the Afghan mujahidin against the Soviets during the 1980s. At age 22, Bin Ladin dropped out of school in Saudi Arabia and joined the Afghan resistance almost immediately following the Soviet invasion in December 1979. While we had heard of Bin Ladin from others with whom we were in contact in Afghanistan, we had no direct contact with him and his profile was low enough to avoid any particular attention.

The Afghan experience provided Bin Ladin with an opportunity to make and strengthen contacts with a wide variety of Islamic extremists of various nationalities. Many of the men who became key members of al-Qa'ida had met him in Afghanistan.

It is at this time in the mid- to late-1980s that Bin Ladin began perverting the teachings of Islam and the Prophet Mohammed for his own violent purposes. In addition, he began to exploit underlying social, political, and economic discontent and widespread resentment of the West in many parts of the Muslim world.

- In a 1988 press interview, he claimed that when a mortar shell that landed a few feet away from him did not explode, he felt it a sign from God to battle all opponents of Islam.
- Urged on by fervent Islamic radicals, he began using his personal fortune to shelter and employ hundreds of militant, stateless, "Afghan Arabs" and to train them for jihad, or holy war, around the world.

Although Bin Ladin returned to Saudi Arabia to work in his family's construction business after the Soviets left Afghanistan in early 1989, he continued to support militant Islamic causes and radicals who by then had begun redirecting their efforts against secular and moderate Islamic governments in the region. He began publicly criticizing the Saudi Government and condemned the Gulf War and the presence of US and other Western forces in the Arabian Peninsula.

- Saudi officials seized Bin Ladin's passport in 1989 in an apparent try to prevent him from solidifying contacts with like-minded extremists he had befriended during the Afghan-Soviet war.
- The Saudis subsequently in 1994 stripped Bin Ladin of his citizenship while he was in Khartoum.

Bin Ladin came to the attention of the CIA as an emerging terrorist threat during his stay in Sudan from 1991 to 1996.

- We saw him as a prominent financial backer of Islamic terrorist movements who was funding the paramilitary training of Arab religious militants operating in, or supporting fellow Muslims in, Bosnia, Egypt, Kashmir, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, and Yemen.
- While in Sudan, Bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida financed Islamic extremists who opposed secular and moderate Islamic governments and who despised the West.
- We characterized him in January 1996 as among the most active financial sponsors of Islamic extremist and terrorist activity in the world.

During his five-year residence in Sudan, Bin Ladin combined business with jihad under the umbrella of the al-Qa'ida organization. In association with powerful members of the ruling Sudanese National Islamic Front, he embarked on several business ventures. His workforce in Sudan included militant Afghan war veterans who were wanted by the authorities in their own countries because of their subversive or terrorist activities.

While in Sudan, Bin Ladin apparently paid particular attention to the turmoil in neighboring Somalia. We believe his perception of events in Somalia played a significant role in molding his views of the United States. He has publicly said the US withdrawal from Somalia demonstrated that Americans were soft and the United States a paper tiger that could be more easily defeated than the Soviets had been in Afghanistan.

CIA's assessment of Bin Ladin during the early 1990s continued to be that he was a major terrorist financier.

- We did not yet see him as the center of a significant organization or network focused on carrying out terrorist attacks on the United States.
- Moreover, he was only one of a number of potential terrorist threats. As such, the Bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida targets competed for intelligence resources with other dangerous targets such as Hizballah, then considered more threatening to US interests.

Nevertheless, as Bin Ladin's prominence grew during the latter part of his residence in Sudan, our awareness of the threat he represented also grew significantly. In early 1996 we singled him out as a major target for our counterterrorism operations.

In fact, what began in early 1996 as an effort designed to penetrate and destroy Bin Ladin's financial network soon provided intelligence revealing a broader and more pernicious terrorist capability that reached well beyond financial activity.

By the time Bin Ladin left Sudan in 1996 and relocated himself and his terror network to Afghanistan, the Intelligence Community had gained a substantial appreciation of the significance of his threat and was taking strong action to try to stop him.

- For example, in January 1996 CIA focused more of its resources on him by creating a dedicated component in the Counterterrorist Center—the Bin Ladin Issue Station—staffed by CIA, NSA, FBI, and other officers. The group's mission was to track him, collect intelligence on him, run operations against him, disrupt his finances, and warn policymakers about his activities and intentions.
- We monitored his whereabouts and increased our knowledge about him and his organization by using every available intelligence means.

It is important to remember that during this mid-1990s period, Bin Ladin was only one of several areas of terrorism concern that we were following. The others included Lebanon's Hizballah, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the Sendero Luminoso in Peru, Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines, and Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers, just to name a few.

The Taliban Sanctuary Years: Evolving into a Strategic Threat

If any doubts remained about the emerging threat Bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida represented to the United States, they were gradually dispelled by a series of declarations he issued from his refuge in Afghanistan during the 1996-1998 timeframe.

- In an undated interview in Afghanistan published in July 1996 in the London daily *The Independent*, Bin Ladin declared that the killing of Americans in the Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia in June 1996 marked the beginning of the war between Muslims and the United States.
- One month later, in August 1996, Bin Ladin, in collaboration with radical Muslim clerics associated with his group, issued a religious edict or fatwa in which he proclaimed a "Declaration of War," authorizing attacks against Western military targets on the Arabian Peninsula.
- In February 1998, six months prior to the August US Embassy bombings in East Africa, Bin Ladin issued another fatwa under the banner of the "World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders." This fatwa stated ominously that all Muslims have a religious duty "to kill Americans and their allies, both civilian and military" worldwide.
- During a subsequent media interview, Bin Ladin explained that all US citizens were legitimate targets because they pay taxes to the US Government.

By the time of the 1998 East Africa bombings, al-Qa'ida had established its modus operandi emphasizing careful planning and exhaustive field preparations toward a goal of inflicting high casualties. For example, Bin Ladin was asked in a November 1996 interview why his organization had not yet conducted attacks in response to its August fatwa. He replied, "If we wanted to carry out small operations, it would have been easy to do so after the statements, but the nature of the battle requires qualitative operations that affect the adversary, which obviously requires good preparation."

By early 1998, CIA knew that the United States was dealing with a sophisticated terrorist organization bent on causing large numbers of American casualties. The East Africa bombings in August 1998 and the attack on the USS Cole in October 2000 succeeded because of al-Qa'ida's meticulous preparation and effective security practices.

- Al-Qa'ida targeting studies and training materials captured around the time of the East Africa and USS Cole attacks revealed that much of the terrorists' advance planning involved careful, patient, and meticulous preparation.
- This included extensive surveillance and casing studies that detailed the vulnerabilities of potential targets. The terrorists' casing study of the US Embassy in Nairobi, for example, was prepared in 1993, five years before the attack. It included information about the building's physical structure, security posture, and business hours, as well as the layout of the reception area inside the Embassy.
- The analysts also pointed out that the intelligence data indicated the terrorists were very much conscious of operational security.

We were also becoming increasingly concerned—and therefore we warned about—al-Qa'ida's interest in acquiring chemical and biological weapons and nuclear materials.

- In a December 1998 interview, Bin Ladin called the acquisition of these weapons a religious duty.
- As early as July 1993, in testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, DCI Woolsey warned of the Intelligence Community's heightened sensitivity to the prospect that a terrorist incident could involve weapons of mass destruction. In February 1996, in testimony to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, DCI Deutsch expressed his concern about the growing lethality, sophistication, and wide-ranging nature of the terrorist threat. He observed that terrorists would push this trend to its most awful extreme by using weapons of mass destruction. I made similar warnings to these committees as early as 1998, when I pointed to Bin Ladin's attempts to purchase or manufacture biological and chemical weapons for an attack against US facilities.

Afghanistan Key to Terrorists' Development

None of Bin Ladin's and al-Qa'ida's extensive terrorist plotting, planning, recruiting, and training in the late 1990s would have been possible without the Taliban sanctuary in Afghanistan.

- The Taliban aided Bin Ladin by assigning him security guards, establishing communications facilities for him and al-Qa'ida, spreading disinformation on his behalf, and permitting him to build and maintain terrorist camps. The Taliban refused to cooperate with efforts by the international community to extradite Bin Ladin after the US indicted him in 1998 on 319 criminal counts, including conspiracy to murder US citizens.

- In return, Bin Ladin invested money in Taliban projects and provided hundreds of well-trained fighters to help the Taliban consolidate and expand its control of the country. We often talk of two trends in terrorism: state supported and people working on their own. In Bin Ladin's case with the Taliban, what we had was something completely new—a terrorist sponsoring a state.

Afghanistan had served as a place of refuge for international terrorists since the 1980s. Since the Soviet invasion and its aftermath, Afghanistan had become a country with a vast infrastructure of camps and facilities for the refuge, training, indoctrination, arming, and financing of tens of thousand of Islamic extremists from all over the world.

- Afghanistan provided Bin Ladin an isolated and relatively safe operating environment to oversee his organization's worldwide terrorist activities.
- Militants who received training in Afghanistan were sent to fight in Kashmir, Chechnya, or Bosnia. When they returned to their homes to resume their normal lives or migrate to other countries, they constituted a ready supply of manpower for terrorist operations.

The al-Qa'ida-Taliban training camps formed the foundation of a worldwide network by sponsoring and encouraging Islamic extremists from diverse locations to forge longstanding ideological, logistical, and personal ties.

- Extremists in the larger camps received basic training in the use of small arms and guerrilla tactics. In the smaller camps, militants received advanced and specialized training in subjects such as explosives, poisons, and assassination techniques.
- Clandestine and counterintelligence tradecraft courses included basic instruction on how to establish secure, cell-based, clandestine organizations to support insurgencies or terrorist operations.
- Bin Ladin emphasized indoctrination in extremist religious ideas. He included the constant repetition that the United States is evil and that the current regimes of Arab countries are not true believers in Islam and should be overthrown as a religious duty.
- Some of the Afghan camps—such as the Derunta camp—also provided the militants instruction in the production and use of toxic chemicals and biological toxins.

In summary, what Bin Ladin created in Afghanistan was a sophisticated adversary. To be sure, as CIA improved its understanding of the threat, it refocused and intensified its efforts to track, disrupt, and bring the terrorists to justice. We were

handicapped, however, by the fact that we had no presence in or access to Afghanistan on a regular basis.

Analysis

Our analysts assessed al-Qa'ida's modus operandi, capabilities, and intentions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Similarly, they warned policymakers during the summer of 2001 that the threat of terrorist attacks was real and serious. Such performance was the result of significant measures by the Directorate of Intelligence to enhance its analytical capabilities assigned to this target.

We strove to find the best balance between strategic and tactical analysis. From 1995 to the 11 September attacks we produced 46 papers that I would call significant strategic intelligence analysis on Bin Ladin, al-Qa'ida, and Islamic extremism.

- A 1996 analysis took a careful look at Bin Ladin and other Islamic extremists as suspects in the Khobar Towers bombing in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.
- Papers in 1997 assessed Bin Ladin's seeking of a WMD capability, and the role of Islamic financial institutions in financing extremist movements.
- A 1998 paper flagged the key shift in the Bin Ladin threat from one aimed at US forces in Saudi Arabia to US interests worldwide.
- A 1999 paper was a wide-ranging, strategic analysis of Bin Ladin's command of a global terrorist network.
- A 2000 paper assessed al-Qa'ida's efforts to develop chemical, biological, and radiological weapons.
- A March 2001 paper analyzed the critical role played by Afghanistan in international terrorism.
- An April 2001 paper assessed the growing propensity of jihadist movements to act as part of a global fight against their perception of a US-led conspiracy against Islam.

We created a separate analytic unit in July 2001 to assure that the demands for daily tactical support did not sidetrack our strategic analytic effort. The separate unit allowed us to isolate its analysts from the grind of daily crises to focus on the bigger picture. It also allowed us to better train and develop the analysts.

- During 2000 and 2001, we also pushed our analytical products, both strategic and tactical, into broader circulation.

In addition to the analytic effort undertaken in the Counterterrorist Center, analysts from across CIA's Directorate of Intelligence contributed to the counterterrorism mission. They carried out specialized work on topics such as the societal issues that create the breeding ground for terrorism, the financial flows that enable terrorism, and explosive and other technical modeling, to name a few.

Since 9/11, we have expanded our capabilities to provide strategic and alternative analysis on terrorism. Additional experienced officers have been added to the effort. They benefit from the fusion of intelligence from all sources that has been the hallmark of the Center. They have access to electronic platforms that enable them to collaborate with counterparts throughout the Intelligence Community, to tap external expertise to help out-of-the-box thinking, and to communicate with policymakers. We are adding to their toolkits regularly so they can manage the volume of information that our focused collection is making available. Their singular goal is to produce over-the-horizon analysis that will enable homeland defense, warfighters, and senior policymakers to make the smart decisions about strategic commitments that will protect the American people against an evolving, dynamic threat.

Warning

The leadership of the CIA repeatedly warned the policy community in the Executive Branch and the Congress of the seriousness of the threat.

I placed terrorism prominently in every annual public testimony since 1997 to the appropriate Congressional Committees on the Worldwide Threat, as shown in a series of excerpts from my Statements for the Record.

- February 1997: "Even as our counterterrorism efforts are improving, international groups are expanding their networks, improving their skills and sophistication, and working to stage more spectacular attacks."
- January 1998: "Mr. Chairman, I must stress that the threat to US interests and citizens worldwide remains high...moreover, there has been a trend toward increasing lethality of attacks, especially against civilian targets...a confluence of recent developments increases the risk that individuals or groups will attack US interests."
- February 1999: "On terrorism, Mr. Chairman, I must be frank in saying that Americans increasingly are the favored targets...there is not the slightest doubt that Usama Bin Ladin, his worldwide allies, and his sympathizers are planning further attacks against us...despite progress against his networks, Bin Ladin's organization has contacts virtually worldwide, including in the United States...he has stated unequivocally that all Americans are targets...we have noted recent activity similar to what occurred prior to the African embassy bombings...and I must tell you we are concerned that one or

more of Bin Ladin's attacks could occur at any time...Bin Ladin's overarching aim is to get the United States out of the Persian Gulf, but he will strike wherever in the world he thinks we are vulnerable."

- February 2000: "Usama Bin Ladin is still foremost among these terrorists, because of the immediacy and seriousness of the threat he poses...everything we have learned recently confirms our conviction that he wants to strike further blows against America...despite some well-publicized disruptions, we believe he could still strike without additional warning."
- February 2001: "The threat from terrorism is real, it is immediate, and it is evolving...as we have increased security around government and military facilities, terrorists are seeking out "softer" targets that provide opportunities for mass casualties...Usama bin Ladin and his global network of lieutenants and associates remain the most immediate and serious threat...as shown by the bombing of our Embassies in Africa in 1998 and his Millennium plots last year, he is capable of planning multiple attacks with little or no warning."

We raised the immediacy of the terrorist threat in other public and private forums as well.

- During the Millennium threat in late 1999, we warned that we could expect between 5 to 15 terrorist attacks against American interests both here and overseas.
- During the Ramadan threat period in the autumn of 2000, we warned that terrorist cells were planning attacks against US and foreign military and civilian targets in the Persian Gulf region. As it turned out, our operations were able to disrupt the terrorists' plans.
- In hearings on terrorism in spring 2001, I told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the Senate Appropriations Committee that the threat from al-Qa'ida was "an immediate and pressing concern." I observed that that, "Despite [our] successes, there are limits to what we can do. We will generally not have specific time and place warning of terrorist attacks...the result...is that I consider it likely that over the next year or so that there will be an attempted terrorist attack against US interests."
- During the week of July 2, 2001, reacting to a rash of intelligence threat reports, I contacted by phone a dozen of my foreign liaison counterparts to urge them to redouble their efforts against al-Qa'ida. The chief of the Counterterrorist Center, the chief of Near East Division, and others made additional urgent calls. These calls resulted in several arrests and detentions in Bahrain, Yemen, and Turkey.

Even with the intense focus on terrorism in general and Bin Ladin in particular, the Intelligence Community had to deal with several other challenges that demanded the highest attention.

- Some issues were themselves closely linked to terrorism, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the danger that some terrorist group would acquire such weapons. In this regard, we have worked extensively—operationally and analytically—on the danger of rogue elements within nuclear states such as Pakistan and India helping terrorists gain access to these weapons.
- Throughout the 1990s and beyond, we were intensely engaged in supporting US policy and our military forces in the Balkans, Haiti, and elsewhere. Under Congressional mandate, we supported the efforts of the International Criminal Tribunal on War Crimes in Yugoslavia to bring some of the accused to justice.

High priority issues had resource consequences for collection, operations, and analysis. Some of these issues required increased tasking of collection assets that were in direct competition with our efforts on terrorism.

- After the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests in 1998, for example, we launched a major effort to improve our ability to warn of the next round of nuclear tests, which entailed the diversion of resources to this issue.

Our experience over several years in assessing, warning about, and operating against al-Qa'ida contributed to our ability to warn during the summer of 2001 that Bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida were engaged in intensive operational planning and preparations and that among their targets of choice was the US homeland. Our collection sources "lit up" during this period. They indicated that multiple spectacular attacks were planned and that some of the plots were in their final stages.

- By long-established doctrine, we disseminated these raw reports immediately and widely to policymakers and action agencies such as the military, State Department, the Federal Aviation Administration, FBI, Department of Transportation, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and others.
- We documented the increased threat in the intelligence analysis that we provided to senior policymakers. We cited plots in the Arabian Peninsula and Europe, and ultimately in August 2001 we warned about Bin Ladin's desire to conduct terrorist attacks in the US homeland.
- The interagency Community Counterterrorism Board also issued several threat advisories during the summer 2001. These advisories, sent to US Government entities that have a counterterrorism mission, noted that al-Qa'ida was most likely to attempt spectacular attacks resulting in numerous

casualties, and that it was prepared to mount one or more terrorist attacks at any time.

The reporting was maddeningly short on actionable details. The most ominous reporting hinting at “something big” was also the most vague. The only occasions in this thread of reporting where there was an explicit or implicit location appeared to point abroad, especially to US interests in the Middle East.

Our analysts tried to find linkages among the reports and linkages to past terrorist threats and tactics. We considered policymakers’ questions whether al-Qa’ida was feeding us this reporting to create panic through disinformation or to test our defenses, but we concluded that the reports were real. When some reporting hinted that an attack had been postponed, we continued to stress that there were multiple attacks planned and that one or more could be continuing apace. We grew concerned that so much of the reporting pointed to attacks overseas and noted that one of Bin Ladin’s goals had long been to strike our homeland.

Our Warnings Were Being Heard.

CIA for many years was well aware that terrorists considered using airplanes in a variety of ways to conduct their operations. We produced both source reports and strategic analysis addressing these issues. CIA collected and disseminated relevant reporting and produced and disseminated relevant analysis to a wide customer base within the US Government, including the FAA. Our information was received and understood by these customers. For example, the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security (the Gore Commission) in 1997 noted:

The FBI, the CIA, and other intelligence sources have been warning that the threat of terrorism is changing in two important ways. First, it is no longer just an overseas threat from foreign terrorists. People and places in the United States have joined the list of targets, and Americans have joined the ranks of terrorists. The bombings of the World Trade Center in New York and the Federal Building in Oklahoma City are clear examples of the shift, as is the conviction of Ramzi Yousef for attempting to bomb twelve American airliners out of the sky over the Pacific Ocean. The second change is that in addition to well-known, established terrorist groups, it is becoming more common to find terrorists working alone or in ad-hoc groups, some of whom are not afraid to die in carrying out their designs.

CIA, FBI, and FAA focused on the potential threat represented by terrorists using airplanes in the 1995 plotting in Manila to bring down 12 US airliners.

- A National Intelligence Estimate later that year—the highest form of coordinated strategic intelligence that the DCI issues—noted this threat. We reiterated this concern when we updated the Estimate two years later.

- Threats to aircraft were also regularly disseminated in reporting and used in analysis.

The information we had about terrorists using airplanes was only part of a wealth of information on a range of terrorist plans and intentions. Even though most of the reporting in this area was of questionable quality, we disseminated it to our customers with appropriate caveats given how seriously we took threats to American lives.

- Our information was passed on to customers in intelligence reports, briefings to senior policymakers, and briefings to Congressional Committees.
- The FAA received this intelligence at its headquarters, and the FAA had a representative in the Counterterrorist Center with access to all analytical and operational information that related to airline security. We are satisfied that all the relevant information we developed in the area of airline threats was made available to the FAA.

We know that our strategic message on terrorism was reaching its audience. For example, in its 2000 annual publication, *Criminal Acts against Civil Aviation 2000*, the FAA emphasized threats to civil aviation posed by Bin Ladin and others.

- The report noted, "Although Bin Ladin is not known to have attacked civil aviation, he has both the motivation and the wherewithal to do so. Bin Ladin's anti-Western and anti-American attitudes make him and his followers a significant threat to civil aviation, especially US civil aviation."
- In citing the plot by convicted World Trade Center bomber Ramzi Yousef to place explosive devices on as many as 12 US airliners flying out of East Asia, the FAA report noted its concerns that others like Yousef who may possess similar skills pose a continuing threat to civil aviation interests.
- The report concluded, "increased awareness and vigilance are necessary to deter future incidents, be they from terrorists or non-terrorists. It is important to do the utmost to prevent such acts rather than to lower security measures by interpreting the statistics [shown as 75 percent lower incidence rate in 2000 compared to 1999] as indicating a decreasing threat."

That said, there is a vast difference between being aware that a type of threat exists and having a specific warning of the date, time, and location of a planned attack. We did not have intelligence of that specificity on which we could warn or take action.

Intelligence Collection

Intelligence collection is the necessary prerequisite to any actions we could take to try to eliminate the terrorist threat posed by Bin Ladin and his al-Qa'ida organization. In the spring of 1999, we did a baseline review of the CIA's operational strategy against Bin Ladin and a new strategic plan. The Counterterrorist Center produced a new comprehensive operational plan of attack against the Bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida target inside and outside Afghanistan. The Center previewed this new strategy to senior CIA management at the end of July 1999. By mid-September, it had been briefed to CIA operational level personnel and to NSA and FBI. CIA then began to put in place the elements of this operational strategy that structured the Agency's counterterrorist activity for the intervening years leading up to the events of September 11.

This strategy took on the name, *The Plan*. It evolved in conjunction with increased covert action authorities and built on what the Counterterrorist Center was recognized as doing well—collection, quick reaction to operational opportunities, renditions and disruptions, and analysis. The Plan emphasized in its multifaceted program the priority of capturing and rendering to justice Bin Ladin and his principal lieutenants.

- This central undertaking, which involved a range of operational initiatives, recognized that the first priority was to acquire intelligence about Bin Ladin by penetrating his organization. Without this effort, the United States could not mount a successful covert action program to stop him or his operations.
- The Plan thus included a strong and focused foreign intelligence collection program. We needed to be able to gather the intelligence that would let us track and act against Bin Ladin and his associates in terrorist sanctuaries including Sudan, Lebanon, Yemen, and most importantly Afghanistan. The Plan comprised an aggressive human source collection effort—both unilateral and joint with liaison partners—and a vigorous development of technical collection within Afghanistan.
- To execute The Plan, the Counterterrorist Center developed a program to select and train officers and put them where the terrorists are located. The Center launched a nation-wide officers recruitment program using the CIA's Career Training Program resources to identify, vet, and hire qualified personnel for counterterrorist assignments in hostile environments. We sought native fluency in Arabic and other terrorist-associated languages, as well as police, military experience and appropriate ethnic background. In addition, the Center established an eight-week advanced Counterterrorist Operations Course to teach CIA's hard won lessons learned and counterterrorism operational methodology.
- Another element of the strategy that emerged in 2000 and 2001 was the use of the Predator unmanned aerial vehicle to monitor the activity of Bin Ladin and his camp network in Afghanistan.

The Predator

Let me explain a bit more about our Predator operations. Between September and December 2000, with the support of Air Force crews and an interagency operations and analysis team, CIA flew an unarmed Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicle on 15 reconnaissance missions over Afghanistan. Although the Taliban detected and launched interceptors against it, the Predator was able to operate over a denied hostile area and returned imagery useful to the foreign intelligence collection program.

During two missions the Predator may have observed Usama bin Ladin. In one case this was an after-the-fact judgment. In the other, sources indicated that Bin Ladin would likely be at his Tarnak Farms facility, and, so cued, the Predator flew over the facility the next day. It imaged a tall man dressed in white robes with a physical and operational signature fitting Bin Ladin. A group of 10 people gathered around him were apparently paying their respects for a minute or two.

With the onset of bad weather in December 2000, the Predator operations ceased for the winter and the aircraft were returned to the United States. Almost immediately, however, planning began for a second deployment. In 2000, Air Force and CIA officers began to discuss the possibility of capitalizing on an Air Force program to arm the Predator by adapting it to carry and fire Hellfire missiles. These officers, and later the leadership of CIA, reasoned that if we could develop the capability to reliably hit a target with a Hellfire missile and could develop the enabling policy and legal framework, we would have a capability to accurately and promptly respond to future sightings of high value targets.

CIA recognized that significant issues would need to be resolved to enable this program. These included the successful completion of weapons testing—technical issues delayed deployment even while we were solving others—approval by the nation hosting the deployed operation, arrangements with the Department of Defense for personnel and equipment, and working through legal issues.

It was also clear that one of the most difficult issues would be developing a command and control arrangement that could respond to fleeting opportunities while ensuring the right level of leadership control over the operation. CIA leadership from the beginning felt it important that there was a full understanding by the President and the National Security Council of the capabilities of the armed Predator and the implications of its use.

Weapons tests occurred between May 22 and June 7, 2001, with mixed results. While missile accuracy was excellent, there were some problems with missile fusing that raised questions about its suitability against some targets. These problems were not resolved in the short term, and remained questions on 11 September 2001.

One issue that occupied much discussion was whether to try to deploy the Predator early in the summer of 2001 in a purely reconnaissance mode to take advantage

of good weather, or to wait until the armed capability was ready and the policy and legal questions were resolved. The Counterterrorist Center argued for the latter option for several reasons.

- The 2000 experience had demonstrated that even if we again sighted Bin Ladin, we did not have a timely response option. Targets in Afghanistan were hours away from conventional attack, even if the policy decision had been made and weapons were positioned and ready.
- Some CIA officers believed that continued reconnaissance operations would undercut later armed operations. The Taliban would almost certainly detect the flights (as it did the previous year), and would alert al-Qa'ida to our presence. Reconnaissance operations would also expose the Predator to the risk of interception or anti-aircraft fire.
- Additionally, indications were that the host country would be unlikely to tolerate extensive operations, especially after the Taliban became aware, as it surely would, of that country's assistance to the United States.

During the summer, CIA led an interagency effort to fully develop the capabilities of the armed Predator and to explore the questions inherent in its use. One question that arose was who would bear responsibility for Predators that might be lost—DOD or CIA. While we finally agreed to split the cost evenly, the question was still in negotiation on 11 September 2001. It is important to emphasize, however, that this issue, while contentious, did not slow down the program. We continued to work all the preparations for armed deployment, with the knowledge that the funding question would eventually be resolved. After September 11 it became a non-issue.

As part of this interagency effort, two exercises were conducted in May and June 2001 to walk through the spectrum of operational and policy questions. These questions included: What are the capabilities of the system? How do we set up the communications architecture? What are the command and control arrangements? What criteria would we use to shoot? Who authorizes weapons firing? What are the implications of a successful firing and of an unsuccessful firing?

In early September 2001, CIA was authorized to deploy the system with weapons-capable aircraft, but for reconnaissance missions only. The DCI did not authorize the shipment of missiles at that time because the host nation had not agreed to allow flights by weapons-carrying aircraft. Moreover, the technical problems that had bedeviled earlier tests remained questions.

Subsequent to 9/11, approval was quickly granted to ship the missiles, and the Predator aircraft and missiles reached their overseas location on September 16, 2001. The first mission was flown over Kabul and Qandahar on September 18 without carrying weapons. Subsequent host nation approval was granted on October 7 and the first armed mission was flown the same day.